

**“If I didn’t  
have  
Freedom  
from  
Torture now  
I would be  
homeless”**

**PAGE 5**

**Inside  
this  
issue:**

**Thank you for  
your emergency  
donations**

**PAGE 3**

**Together we  
stand with  
Ukraine**

**PAGE 6**

**“No one is born a  
refugee, but anyone  
can become one”**

**PAGE 8**







## Foreword

Since the last time I wrote to you in *The Survivor*, we have seen distressing headlines of war in Ukraine. As millions flee for their lives, reports of torture are on the rise. We stand ready to offer support to those who make it to safety in the UK. We will continue to help survivors of torture to recover, no matter where in the world they come from. People like Patricia, Jean and Ibrahim whom you can read about in this newsletter. Whether they come from Syria, West Africa, or Afghanistan, you have shown that everyone deserves to feel safe again. It is only thanks to your support that we can provide the expert care survivors of torture need to regain their strength and rebuild their lives.

In this edition you can see how your incredible support helps people who have survived torture to break their silence and feel whole again, wherever they are from. Their strength is a constant source of inspiration. Their recovery is proof that with care and support a life can be rebuilt.

Here at Freedom from Torture, supporters like you are our greatest strength. You have always been there for survivors of torture and I am so grateful for that.

Thank you,

Sonya Sceats,  
Chief Executive

## CONTENTS

- 3 Thank you for your emergency donations
- 4 Sowing seeds of hope for survivors
- 5 "If I didn't have Freedom from Torture I would be homeless"
- 6 Together we stand with refugees
- 7 Regaining strength, reconnection and recovery through therapy
- 8 "No one is born a refugee, but anyone can become one"
- 9 Your legacy gift provides sanctuary, support and kindness
- 10 Can you help torture survivors like Ibrahim receive specialist therapy?
- 11 Dates for your diary
- 12 Top chefs and survivors cook together at the great street feast this summer



Freedom from Torture is dedicated to healing and protecting people who have survived torture. We provide therapies to improve physical and mental health, we medically document torture, and we provide legal and welfare help. We expose torture globally, we fight to hold torturing states to account and we campaign for fairer treatment of torture survivors in the UK.

For more information about Freedom from Torture please email [info@freedomfromtorture.org](mailto:info@freedomfromtorture.org) or write to 111 Isledon Road, London N7 7JW or call 020 7697 7788 or visit [www.freedomfromtorture.org](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org)

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All articles feature true stories about people you have helped but names have been changed and models are used in photographs to protect the identity of survivors.

This newsletter has been printed on paper produced from responsible sources: a mixture of FSC certified forests, recycled material and controlled wood.

Please recycle all items after use





# Thank you for your emergency donations

**EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND APPEAL 2021**

In our last appeal, you provided urgent help and basic essentials to survivors like Momo who have nowhere else to turn.

**T**hanks to your incredible support, hundreds of survivors of torture like Momo have received vital help through our Emergency Relief Fund. Many survivors of torture are forced to live in poverty, not knowing where their next meal will come from.

Recent rising costs of living have pushed people like Momo further in to crisis, as they hit the poorest in our society the hardest. Your response to our appeal was extraordinary. Thanks to you, the amount survivors receive through our Emergency Relief Fund to cover a week's essentials has now increased from £35 to £40.

Supporters like you who generously donated to our Emergency Relief Fund made this happen.

Your generous gifts to our latest appeal meant Momo could afford to buy ingredients to make hot meals at a time when he had nothing else.

**“For me, it’s helped a lot. Now I can just cook and put it in the freezer, because then I can spend a week without needing to buy things outside. Once I’m hungry, I eat.”**

## MOMO

You have shown that people who have been through torture deserve our compassion and support and your generosity has shown them they are welcome when the UK systems can feel hostile.

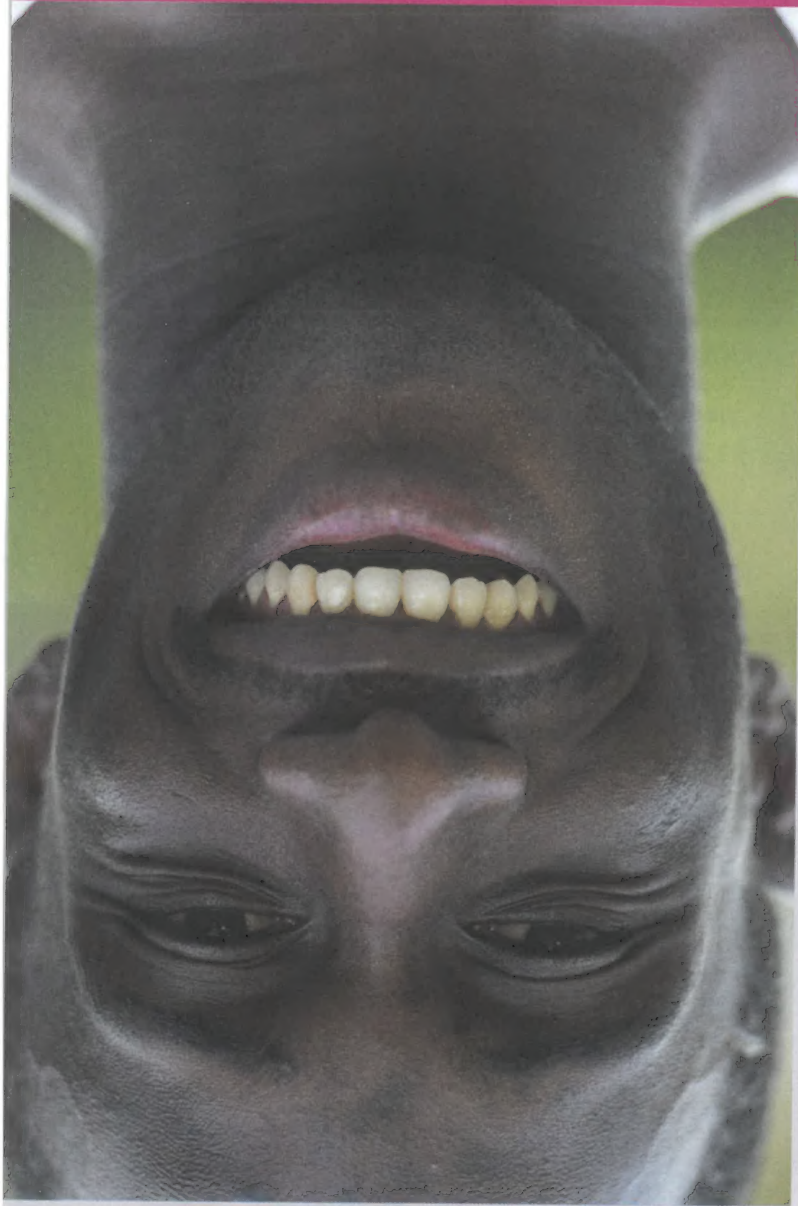
You make such a difference to the lives of torture survivors. You show them that here in UK, we care.

Momo said: “If I met supporters today, I will tell them, thank you for everything they are doing for people like me who live in this country without family, who live in this country without hope. I just have to thank them for everything they are doing for us, and God bless, God bless, God bless them.”

## EMERGENCY SUPPORT FOR EVERYONE WHO NEEDS IT

There’s still time to support people like Momo by donating to the Emergency Relief Fund. Visit [www.freedomfromtorture.org/TheSurvivor](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/TheSurvivor), make a donation using the form included, or phone: 020 7697 7788.

Torture survivors and refugees like Momo often have nowhere to turn when their limited budget has to cover everything from bus fares to clothes and food for the week. Thank you for being there.





We are also excited to launch our online in memory garden, a special website to remember your loved ones and raise funds for torture survivors in their memory. It's easy to set up, write personal messages with access to friends and family worldwide. Contact Emma on [Ehamilton@freedomfromtorture.org](mailto:Ehamilton@freedomfromtorture.org) or call on 020 7697 7810.

## OUR FREEDOM GARDEN, IN LOVING MEMORY



Thanks to you, Rashid and so many others had this incredible opportunity to receive life-changing gardening therapy to help heal their lives after torture. They were able to get outside in our beautiful and safe grounds after spending so much time in small flats or bedsits, they were able to make friends and share their pain.

Thanks to you, Rashid feels so much better and wanted to share his story. We will be in touch soon with our 2022 summer gardening appeal to tell you more about the new plans and how you can help fund places for survivors.

Gardening therapy has had such an incredible impact for so many people, people like Rashid who fled to the UK alone at just 14 years old to escape the Taliban. After suffering from depression Rashid joined the group as a totally new way to access therapy. He said "When you are in the garden, you are having a great time and it is very good for your mind, for relaxing. When you talk, whatever you are feeling and whatever you are sharing, you feel a bit more free. That's why I like it."

**O**ur biggest gardening therapy group takes place in our main centre in London with an onsite garden and a specialist Horticultural Therapist, Karen, who will be running sessions every week. The newly developed programme consists of a 4 week introduction and grounding course followed by 16 weeks of gardening therapy facilitated by Karen and a horticultural therapy volunteer. The therapy is all set up and ready to go but we still have many extra costs for supplies, travel to get there and interpreters – and we need your help to fund the programme.

# Sowing seeds of hope for survivors

We are delighted to announce that, thanks to your support, a new gardening therapy service is about to restart! Unfortunately we had to pause during the pandemic, but soon survivors will be able to participate in garden therapy again.



Sowing seeds of hope for survivors



“If I didn't have the support from Torture now, I would be homeless.”

# “If I didn't have the support from Freedom from Torture now, I would be homeless.”

When Patricia, 28, spoke out against the corrupt government in her country, she was kidnapped from her workplace, tortured and beaten. She had to leave her whole life behind to escape, but thankfully you helped her.

“Thanks to Freedom from Torture I can travel to therapy sessions. That makes me feel good, because they're the only places I feel safe”

## PATRICIA

Because of your generosity, Patricia can now feel hopeful again. With your support, she can once again focus on what's important to her. Thank you.

The first thing Patricia, 28, noticed when she arrived in the UK was just how cold it was. It was winter in London and Patricia had been forced to escape her home country of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a place she remembers fondly. “It's a very hot country and people are so lovely. We love music, we love dancing, we a love party. It's a nice country.”

Back home, Patricia was surrounded by extended family. She was an ambitious graduate and a member of one of the most prominent opposition parties in the country striving for change. She was repeatedly detained, tortured and sexually abused at the hands of state police for several days at a time. The final straw came when she was abducted while at work, taken away and beaten for two days. Following this vicious attack, she was forced to leave her home and flee to find safety with her brother in the UK.

Fleeing isn't an easy option. Patricia said “It's more difficult here, because I can't work, I can't do anything here. In my country, I had my own life”. Claiming asylum has been a long, tough process which has left Patricia feeling stressed, anxious and depressed. Your support has meant so much to her. Thanks to you, she found Freedom from Torture and we could offer welfare guidance and financial support through our Emergency Relief Fund. Patricia said “If I didn't have the support from Freedom from Torture now, I would be homeless.”

Thanks to your donations, Patricia has received psychotherapy from an expert therapist, Maya. These regular sessions have meant she can begin to heal the scars of her physical and mental torture.

“I was going through a lot of things at the same time. Now I have someone I can talk with. You're just free to say what's going through your mind, through your heart. And that's good. I don't know if I can live without the therapy again, because it's very helpful for me. The way Maya is there, she's always there.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**£16** can provide half an hour of expert therapy for someone like Patricia

**£40** can help fund an emergency payment for a destitute survivor



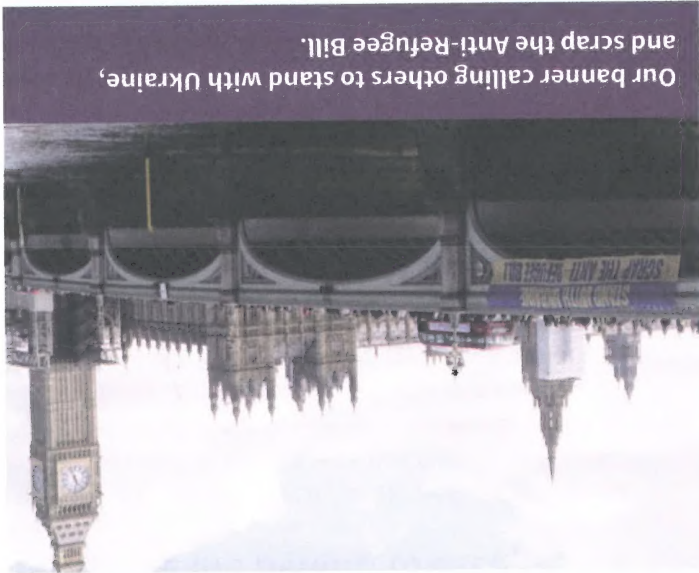


# Together we stand with refugees

In March, the House of Commons voted to pass one of the cruelest parts of the Nationality and Borders Bill, Clause 11, which will punish people fleeing war and torture, just because they made their own way to safety.



You helped Director of Survivor Empowerment Kolbassia Haousson, our CEO Sonya Scaats and Nadine Tunasi from Survivors Speak Out to deliver our most successful petition in history to parliament.



Our banner calling others to stand with Ukraine, and scrap the Anti-Refugee Bill.

**T**hese government decisions are out of step with public opinion. Torture survivors are among those who will be placed at greatest risk of criminalisation and marginalisation in this attack on the rights of refugees. We will continue to campaign for better lives for torture survivors; the best way we can do this is as part of the biggest coalition in British history to defend the rights of all refugees. Thankfully we can rely on supporters like you to show kindness and empathy to refugees and people fleeing torture.

Recent news that thousands of families have had to flee Ukraine to find safety reminds us that no one chooses to be a refugee. Supporters like you have chosen to respond with compassion. Earlier this year, thousands of supporters like you came together showing their support for refugees when you said 'no' to the government's cruel Nationality and Borders Bill. The campaign grew bigger than we could have ever imagined with 129 co-signatories from other

## MORE INFORMATION

There is always time to tell the government that you welcome refugees and your voice always counts. You can:



**Follow us on** Facebook and Instagram to share our messages of hope – not hostility.



**Sign up** to receive our latest emails to take part in live campaigns. Simply tick 'yes' under emails on your donation form.



**Share** this newsletter in your community or with friends and family so they can learn about what refugees face in the UK.



# Regaining strength, reconnection and recovery through therapy

Emine is a psychological therapist at our London centre, and came to the UK as a refugee. She joined Freedom from Torture 13 years ago and below she shares what a typical day supporting survivors of torture looks like.

*Morning -*

I start my day at 9am. In total I have about 16 clients. On an average day I would see 3 to 4 of them per day in a mixture of online video calls, and face-to-face sessions. It's really important for our clients to have in-person sessions. During lockdown and the pandemic they had a really hard time psychologically and financially. For survivors who do not speak fluent English we always make sure we see them with an interpreter so they can talk freely in their own language.

*Morning break -* I like to take a coffee break in the Freedom from Torture garden, in the fresh air, looking at the plants our survivor gardening group have planted. It gives me a nice feeling.

*Morning sessions -* Because of the generous donations we receive from supporters like you, we use a variety of therapies at Freedom from Torture. I'm a psychological therapist but I use different approaches including EMDR (Eye Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing)

Our clients come to this country following difficult journeys, detention and torture, each of them has really bad experiences, and these stay with them. Talking therapy is just one way of to reduce the impact of the bad experiences they endured in the past. Often they are not aware they are affected in daily life. For example, many clients suffer when hearing police sirens, many can be fearful for no reason, or they can't eat, because this is the physical reaction to their trauma.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**£31** can cover the cost of one face-to-face therapy session with a specialist Freedom from Torture therapist like Emine

**£55** can cover a therapy session with two specialist staff - one therapist to guide the person talking about their trauma, and one interpreter to help them speak freely

Every session is a confidential space where they can talk about their experiences but also what's happening in daily life. Thanks to your support we help them to make a reconnection. Your donations mean we can offer them different techniques: breathing, grounding, how to manage symptoms like panic attacks.

*Lunchtime -*

When everyone is in the centre, colleagues and I meet in the staff room and have lunch or coffee together. As therapists, we know how important it is to look after ourselves, as they say 'you are what you eat'! I usually bring my own food from home.

*Meeting -*

We have a weekly team meeting with other clinicians to discuss cases and client progress.

*Afternoon sessions -*

A feeling of safety is very important for survivors of torture. It's important they feel they are welcomed here. Freedom from Torture plays a big role in this. We make them feel that they are safe, they are not alone. We are here to build bridges - to support them.

It takes some time. Especially for those with children. But our clients are resilient, they don't like to be felt sorry for. We are not here to rescue them. We are here to help them to regain their own strength.

*End of day -*

I finish my day at 5pm unless I'm on duty cover. That means I receive calls out of hours from clients facing an emergency or in urgent need of our help.





# “No one is born a refugee, but anyone can become one”

“No one is born a refugee, but anyone can become one”

Jean, 50, was a community leader and church pastor in the Democratic of Congo (DRC) when he was tortured and forced to flee for his life. He arrived in the UK traumatised and broken. Thankfully, because of your donations to Freedom from Torture, he was able to attend regular therapy sessions. Now he has refugee status and has completed his degree, he wanted to share his story. He said “When a life is rehabilitated, it can achieve more and help the society to get better.”

**n the DRC Jean wanted to make his country a better, safer place. He helped open accessible free schools for thousands of children and undertook youth work encouraging young people not to get involved in corrupt government schemes and work to a more positive, safer future for themselves and their country. As a popular Church pastor he was seen as a threat to the corrupt government and he was tortured.**

Luckily, Jean survived and escaped to the UK. He said “I was a broken man but Freedom from Torture gave me the confidence to get through what happened. My therapist said to me, ‘There are only two ways to think about struggles in life; one, is we can try every time and one is we can give up? So I chose to try. All you can do is keep hope by trying and that is how I live my life.’”

After years of therapy and being granted right to live in the UK, Jean has finally been able to complete a degree in Sociology and Criminology with Quantitative Methods. A very specialised subject which looks into the core roots of societal problems. As Jean said “There are many problems all over the world, especially in my country and I wanted to look into them to try and change things from the root cause. For instance, with the problem of street homelessness



**Torturers tried to destroy Jean's life, but he didn't let them. With your support therapy helped him through his trauma and he now has a degree.**

children or criminal activity, you need to look at the data behind why this is happening and that's how you can make change and show governments where and how they can invest in these areas to support the community.”

Jean said “No one is born a refugee, but everyone can be forcedly become a refugee for many reasons, in my case for a political reason. We come to the UK with different valuable skills and qualifications. All refugees need rehabilitation and protection. This is my story and I wish more survivors of torture could access the support that helped to rebuild my life and become useful to the UK society.”



# Your legacy gift provides sanctuary, support and kindness

Long-time supporters of Freedom from Torture, Maggie and Alexis, have pledged a gift in their Will. They share their stories below.

**“We’ve been supporters of Freedom from Torture for more than 20 years. We believe that those who flee unimaginable horrors in their own countries deserve sanctuary, support and kindness here. We have left the organisation a gift in our Wills because we trust Freedom from Torture to do just that.**

The gift is for people who will never know us, or we all deserve to be able to live with hope and dignity. In practical terms, we’ve worded our bequest as a considerable percentage of the equity in our house for when we die. Relevant family members involved know and understand our wishes.”

Maggie was born in Exeter at the tail end of the Second World War and said “My parents who were made homeless in the Exeter Blitz of 1942 had to endure sub-standard

**“We both believe in behaving towards others as we ourselves would like to be treated.”**

**MAGGIE AND ALEXIS**

Our Free Will Service is for anyone aged 55 or over. We cover the cost of a simple Will through participating solicitors across the UK, and most people who use it choose to include a gift to Freedom from Torture. If you are able to support our work in this way we would be really grateful.

For more information about leaving a gift in your Will or our Free Will Service call Emma Hamilton on **020 7697 7810**, email [ehamilton@freedomfromtorture.org](mailto:ehamilton@freedomfromtorture.org) or visit [www.freedomfromtorture.org/agiftinyourwill](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/agiftinyourwill)

## FREE WILL SERVICE

**As well as protecting the interests of your loved ones, a Will can help further the causes about which you feel most deeply. Your values will live on – we promise to keep fighting for a torture-free world.**

Alexis was born in 1940, his Mother was from an Anglo-Greek family based in Safford and his father from an old family from the island of Chios. He recounted, “we escaped to England via Egypt in 1945 at the end of the German Occupation and the beginning of the Greek Civil War. My mother’s family were well off so my refugee status was relatively privileged.”

As well as protecting the interests of your loved ones, a Will can help further the causes about which you feel most deeply. Your values will live on – we promise to keep fighting for a torture-free world.

the start of 1989 and we’ve been together ever since.”

had three small children. Only now do I begin to realise how hard life was for them. I left at the age of 19 and travelled extensively, including an overland trip and 8 years in Australia. I came back to the UK in 1987. Alexis and I met at





## IBRAHIM

**"I learnt in therapy not to think about the past, what's wrong with you. That can be causing more damage in your mind. Freedom from Torture encouraged me to cool your mind down, you know, that's not the end of your life. It really helped me a lot."**

**T**hey were violent and brutal. Ibrahim said "I was scared, when they broke the door down, they come, put us on the floor, they put our hand on our backs, shouting 'Lay on the floor.' Where is your dad?" His father was a member of a political opposition group, and for this Ibrahim was arrested and tortured. He was held in a cell for many days, beaten and had cigarettes put out on his body.

Soon after his release he was told by a police officer that if he stayed in the country, he would certainly be killed. Neighbouring countries were not safe, so Ibrahim was left with no choice but accept an offer from people smugglers who took him on a dangerous journey to the UK. He was forced to leave his wife behind. When he arrived, he was abandoned by the strangers. Scared, isolated and barely able to speak the language he asked a shopkeeper for help. "He said to me, 'Oh, it's time to close the shop now.' I said 'How can I go? I don't know where I have to go.' So on that night I just slept on the street, but I felt cold because it was a February night."

# Can you help torture survivors like Ibrahim receive specialist therapy?

Ibrahim, 26, is a survivor of torture from Guinea. Back home, he ran his own business with a friend. He had a wife, and enjoyed spending time with his friends and family. One day, the police came knocking on his door.

Your donations mean a lot to Ibrahim. Thanks to you, he has received support from Freedom from Torture for two years. Ibrahim said "Right now, in my life, I feel like I'm secure now and safe. Freedom from Torture makes a very big difference."

While things are still very difficult for Ibrahim, he is able to cope day by day with the help from an expert therapist. He explained "For now, it's helping me because my therapist is always encouraging me, don't give up my life. She is helping me a lot."

Even with this support, he still lives with the traumatic memories of his past.

"Now I feel safe, but I just worry about how long I'll be – because I worry what if I am going home? That would be a problem for me. So I fear about my life. The last time I spoke with my wife, she told me the police came into the house asking for me."

He says: "Freedom from Torture, they changed my life. I feel like a normal person now. But even though I am still coping I'm not 100%, maybe like 60% more better than before."

Your donations can help Ibrahim to continue receiving the vital therapy he needs to recover from his experiences, and begin to progress his life.

## HOW YOU CAN HELP

**£15** can cover the cost of travel to one of our centres across the UK for someone in need of therapy

**£31** can cover the cost of one therapy session for someone like Ibrahim





# Dates for your diary

## The Great Street Feast

- Wednesday 22 June 2022, 7pm-10.30pm
- BAFTA PICCADILLY, London

Celebrating food and flavours from around the world with survivors of torture and top London chefs. Plus, a celebrity in conversation with actor **Juliet Stevenson** and Broadcaster **Natasha Kaplinsky OBE**.

To book tickets for this exciting event, please call **020 7697 7812** or turn the page over for more details.

## Exile and Healing: An evening of poetry and music

- Wednesday 22 June 2022
- Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Way, Oxford OX4 4EJ

Join our Oxford supporters group for 'Exile and Healing', an evening of music and poetry featuring renowned author, Mark Haddon, award-winning poet, Pat Winslow, and other wonderful acts.

Tickets will be available soon and wine and soft drinks will be provided. For further information contact **freedomfromtortureoxford@hotmail.com** or visit our website at **www.freedomfromtorture.org/exileandhealing**

## Chorton Open Gardens

- Saturday 25 June & Sunday 26 June 2022
- Chorton-cum-Hardy, Manchester

Visit a range of gardens open each day including community gardens, allotments and a roof garden. Unearth ideas for sustainability and attracting wildlife.

Find out more at:

**www.freedomfromtorture.org/Chorton** or call Sabine on: **020 7697 7749**

## Crossing Over Water Challenge

- Friday 19 August to Wednesday 21 September 2022

After last year's brilliant success, Crossing Over Water is back this year. We are looking for enthusiastic individuals and groups to choose your own method of crossing over water to honor the dangerous and precarious journeys many survivors have to make across water to reach safety. From swimming 5k, to kayaking, to walking along a river and crossing each bridge!

To find out more, or register your interest, email Sabine at **snierhoff@freedomfromtorture.org** or call her on: **020 7697 7749**

## South Downs Coastal Walk

- Sunday 10 July 2021 - Start time 12pm or 1pm depending on walk

Join our East Sussex supporters group for a choice of three beautiful coastal walks starting in Exceat/Seaford, Eastbourne or East Dean. Dogs welcome. Please try and help us raise even more funds by getting sponsored. For more information, email **FFEastSussex@gmail.com** or check our website at **www.freedomfromtorture.org/southdowns**

## The Doctors' Orchestra Concert




- Monday 19 September 2022
- Cadogan Hall, London, 7:30pm-10:30pm

The annual Doctors' Orchestra Concert is back for its thirteenth year playing in aid of Freedom from Torture! The talented group of doctors will be joined by young virtuoso Simon Zhu. Zhu's exceptional talent has seen him win prizes and tour around the world, including being a prize-winner of the prestigious Menuhin Competition. To buy tickets for this event, please visit **www.freedomfromtorture.org/orchestra** or call Cadogan Hall Box Office on **020 7730 4500**

## The New Chapter - Freedom from Torture Literary Festival

- Thursday 24 November 2022
- London Library, London, 6:30pm-10:00pm

Freedom from Torture's Literary festival is back this year at the London Library. This special evening will feature live readings and performances from best-selling authors, poets and survivors from our Write to Life group, all focused on "The New Chapter" To register your interest for this exciting event and be informed when tickets are on sale please email: **events@freedomfromtorture.org**

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# THE GREAT STREET FEAST



## Top chefs and survivors cook together at the Great Street Feast this summer

Join us for an evening of gourmet street food and entertainment in celebration of Refugee Week 2022. Our award-winning Great Street Feast is returning to London's BAFTA HQ in Piccadilly at 7pm on Wednesday 22 June raising vital funds for survivors.

**T**his exclusive event celebrates food and cultures from around the world, and we are so excited to be joined by award-winning actor Juliet Stevenson and broadcaster Natasha Kaplinsky who will be sharing food memories and stories from their illustrious careers on stage and screen.

And for the food? Our lineup of culinary talent have curated the ultimate menu of gourmet street food just for you! Chefs include **Paul Merrett** of Century Club and BBCs Saturday Kitchen; **Anton Manganaro** who is BAFTA's "chef to the stars"; **Chaya Maya** of Ottolenghi, bringing a Mauritian twist to some of the unique ideas from the Ottolenghi Test Kitchen; **Cesar Garcia** of Iberica, renowned for its contemporary Spanish cuisine; **Philip Juma** of Juma Kitchen, offering a distinctive and modern interpretation of traditional Iraqi food and **Esra Muslu**, whose Istanbul-inspired restaurant Zahter has opened to rave reviews, providing delectable sweet treats to finish.

Torture survivor and refugee chef **Nafa**, originally from Sri Lanka, will be creating dishes from her homeland. Nafa rediscovered her love of cooking after joining Freedom from Torture's therapeutic baking group, and since finishing her

therapy with us has gained experience working in top hotel kitchens across London. This exclusive menu is one not to be missed.

All the proceeds from this event will go to funding the specialist support that only Freedom from Torture can offer. Support like our therapeutic baking group, where survivors are welcomed in to a safe space and begin to overcome their trauma using the therapeutic process of baking bread.

Book your tickets today. Our Great Street Feast is sure to be an evening you will not forget!

### TICKETS ARE ON SALE NOW!

**Wednesday 22 June 2022, 7pm-10:30pm**  
**BAFTA, 195 Piccadilly, London, W1J 9LN**

Tickets are £70 and include all food, wine and entertainment. [www.freedomfromtorture.org/feast](http://www.freedomfromtorture.org/feast) to purchase tickets or call on 020 7697 7812.